

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. An image forming apparatus, comprising:
a plurality of imaging units;
a loading unit formed on a top face of a
main body of the image forming apparatus;
10 a discharging unit disposed at an operation
side of the main body, wherein an image-formed
recording medium is discharged through the
discharging unit to the loading unit; and
a plurality of developer containing members
15 disposed in the main body, the developer containing
members being arranged in a direction extending from
the operation side of the main body, and the
developer containing members providing the
corresponding imaging units with developer;
20 wherein
the developer containing members are
detachable from the main body of the image forming
apparatus, and can be handled in a space above the
image forming apparatus.

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2. The image forming apparatus as claimed
5 in claim 1,

wherein, as the developer containing member becomes distant from the operation side, the developer containing member is disposed at a higher position.

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3. The image forming apparatus as claimed
15 in claim 2,

wherein
the loading unit can be opened around a rotative center unit disposed at a position beyond the developer containing members.

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4. The image forming apparatus as claimed
25 in claim 3,

wherein

the rotative center unit is disposed at a position lower than a highest portion of the developer containing member that is most distant from
5 the discharging unit.

10 5. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 3,

wherein

the rotative center unit includes an axle unit provided in the main body, the axis of the axle unit being in width directions of the main body, and
15 a bearing unit provided in the loading unit, the bearing unit being supported by the axle unit.

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6. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 3,

wherein

25 the loading unit can be opened in

directions extending from and approaching to the operation side.

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7. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 3, further comprising:

10 an operations panel disposed on a facing of the main body positioned at the operation side of the image forming apparatus;

wherein

15 the loading unit can be rotatively opened to a position higher than the facing on which the operations panel is disposed.

20 8. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 7,

wherein

25 a highest portion of the loading unit is as high as a highest portion of the facing on which the operations panel is disposed.

5 9. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 1,

 wherein

 a lowest portion of the loading unit is
lower than a highest portion of the developer
10 containing member disposed at a lowest position.

15 10. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 1, further comprising:

 a paper feeding cassette detachably
provided in the main body, the paper feeding cassette
storing a recording medium on which an image is to be
20 formed.

25 11. The image forming apparatus as claimed

in claim 10,

wherein the paper feeding cassette can be attached to and detached from the main body in directions extending from and approaching to the 5 operation side of the main body.

10 12. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

an openable tray provided on the main body, on which a recording medium can be stacked; wherein

15 the loading unit and the openable tray can be opened within a range of a width of the main body.

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13. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 12,

wherein

the openable tray can be opened backward 25 from the operation side.

5 14. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 1,

 wherein

 the loading unit is a portion of a facing
of the main body covering the developer containers.

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15 15. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 1,

 wherein

 the loading unit extends from an end unit
under the discharging unit to a direction extending
from the discharging unit, and has a plurality of
20 ribs protruding upward thereon.

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16. The image forming apparatus as claimed

in claim 15,

wherein

the manner in which the ribs are disposed
is substantially spoke-wise from a center at an end
5 unit side of the loading unit.

10 17. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 15,

wherein

the quantity of the ribs is three.

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18. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 1,

20 wherein

a plurality of curves protruding upward is
formed on a surface of the loading unit in width
directions.

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19. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 1,

5 wherein

 the surface of the loading unit is slanted
in a substantially same manner as the developer
storage members are slanted.

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20. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 1,

15 wherein

 the imaging units are disposed at a slant
in the same direction as the developer containing
members; and

20 a surface of the loading unit is formed at
a slant in the same direction as the imaging units.

25 21. The image forming apparatus as claimed

in claim 1, further comprising:

an intermediate transfer unit disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction as the developer containing members;

5 wherein

an image formed by the imaging units is transferred to the intermediate transfer unit, and

a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the intermediate

10 transfer unit.

15 22. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

an optical writing unit disposed at a slant in the same direction as the developer containing members, which optical writing unit writes an image

20 on each image retaining unit using a light beam;

wherein

a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the optical writing unit.

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23. The image forming apparatus as claimed
5 in claim 1, further comprising:

an optical writing unit that writes an
image on an image retaining unit using a light beam;
and

10 image formed by the imaging unit is transferred;

wherein

the imaging unit, the optical writing unit,
the intermediate transfer unit, and a surface of the
loading unit are provided at a slant substantially in
15 the same direction as the developer containing
members.

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24. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 1,

wherein

the space required for handling the
25 developer containing members is limited to width of

the main body, the width being perpendicular to directions in which the image-formed recording medium is discharged through the discharging unit

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25. An image forming apparatus,
comprising:

10 a plurality of imaging units;
main body of the image forming apparatus;
15 a discharging unit disposed at an operation side of the main body, wherein an image-formed recording medium is discharged through the discharging unit to the loading unit; and
20 a plurality of developer containing members disposed in the main body, the developer containing members being arranged in a direction extending from the operation side of the main body, and the developer containing members providing the corresponding imaging units with developer;
25 wherein
the developer containing member closest to the discharging unit is disposed at a lower position than the developer containing member most distant

from the discharging unit.

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26. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 25,

wherein

the discharging unit is disposed at a
10 higher position than the position at which the
developer containing member closest to the
discharging unit is disposed, and at a lower position
than the position at which the developer containing
member most distant from the discharging unit is
15 disposed.

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27. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 25,

wherein

the loading unit is configured in a manner
in which a lowest portion thereof is lower than a
25 discharging point of the discharging unit.

5 28. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 25, further comprising:

 an operations panel disposed on a facing of
the main body positioned at the operation side of the
image forming apparatus;

10 wherein

 the loading unit is configured in a manner
in which a highest portion thereof is substantially
as high as the facing on which the operations panel
is disposed.

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 29. The image forming apparatus as claimed
20 in claim 25,

 wherein

 the loading unit is configured in a manner
in which a lowest portion thereof is disposed at a
lower position than a position at which a highest
25 portion of a lowest one of the developer containing

members is disposed.

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30. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 25,

wherein

the loading unit is a portion of a facing
10 of the main body, the portion covering the developer
containing members.

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31. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 25,

wherein

the loading unit extends from an end unit
20 positioned below the discharging unit in a direction
extending from the discharging unit; and
a plurality of ribs are provided on the
loading unit, the ribs protruding upward from a
surface of the loading unit.

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32. The image forming apparatus as claimed
5 in claim 31,

wherein

the ribs are disposed substantially spoke-
wise from a center at a side of the end unit of the
loading unit.

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33. The image forming apparatus as claimed
15 in claim 31,

wherein the quantity of the ribs is three.

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34. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 25,

wherein

a plurality of curves protruding upward is
25 formed on a surface of the loading unit in directions

perpendicular to a direction in which a recording medium is discharged from the discharging unit.

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35. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,

wherein

10 the loading unit is configured in a manner in which a surface thereof is slanted in the same direction as the direction in which the developer containing members are arranged.

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36. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,

20 wherein

the imaging units are disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction in which the developer containing members are disposed; and

25 a surface of the loading unit is disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction in

which the imaging units are disposed.

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37. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

an intermediate transfer unit disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction as the 10 developer containing members;

wherein

an image formed by the imaging units is transferred to the intermediate transfer unit, and

15 a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the intermediate transfer unit.

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38. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

an optical writing unit disposed at a slant 25 in the same direction as the developer containing members, which optical writing unit writes an image

on each image retaining unit using a light beam;

wherein

a surface of the loading unit is formed at
a slant in the same direction as the optical writing
5 unit.

10 39. The image forming apparatus as claimed
in claim 25, further comprising:

an optical writing unit that writes an
image on an image retaining unit using a light beam;
and

15 an intermediate transfer unit to which the
image formed by the imaging unit is transferred;

wherein

the imaging unit, the optical writing unit,
the intermediate transfer unit, and a surface of the
20 loading unit are provided at a slant substantially in
the same direction as the developer containing
members.